

MARY HARTMAN,
MARY HARTMAN

EPISODE #46

Written by
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARY	LOUISE LASSER
TOM	GREG MULLAVEY
MARTHA	DODY GOODMAN
GEORGE	PHIL BRUNS
CATHY	DEBRALEE SCOTT
LORETTA	MARY KAY PLACE
CHARLIE	GRAHAM JARVIS
GRANDPA	VICTOR KILIAN

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ACT ONEMARY'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

IT'S ABOUT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING. MARY, SOLA, A ROBE OVER HER NIGHTGOWN, DEEP IN UNHAPPY THOUGHT, IS AT TABLE, SLOWLY SIPPING A MUG OF COFFEE WHICH SHE HOLDS IN BOTH HANDS. MOMENT. TOM, BATHROBE OVER HIS PAJAMAS, ENTERS FROM LIVING ROOM.

TOM

Mary, what are you doing down here at five o'clock in the morning???

MARY

I couldn't sleep. Why are you down here?

TOM

I got up to go to the john, and when I came back to bed you weren't there.

MARY

I've been down here since four o'clock.

TOM

Doing what?

MARY

Well, I cleaned the stove... I scrubbed out the sink.

TOM

At four o'clock in the morning???

MARY

What else is there to do at that hour?

TOM

Sleep.

MARY

You're not sleeping.

TOM

I told you. I had to go to the john.

MARY

I've been meaning to ask you -- how come you have to go to the bathroom at five o'clock every morning lately?

TOM

I don't know. Ever since I turned thirty-five, I've had to make this extra trip. The same time every morning. You can set your clock by it. Anyway, that's just normal. But cleaning the oven and scrubbing the sink at four o'clock in the morning -- what's that all about?

MARY

Scrubbing the sink and cleaning the oven helps my think. And believe me, I've got a lot to think about.

TOM

Like what?

MARY

Like it's going to be about twenty-three years before our sexual desire are synchronized again.

TOM

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

MARY

I was reading an article...

TOM

(QUIET DESPAIR AT THAT DANGER SIGNAL)

Oh, boy...

MARY

About the rise and fall of sexual desires between men and women. Did you know it's like a diamond?

TOM

(UTTERLY AT SEA) What??

MARY

(PUTTING HER THUMBS AND FOREFINGERS TOGETHER TO FORM A DIAMOND) See, the top of the diamond, when men and women are in the embryo, their sex is practically the same. As a matter of fact, for a while, you can't even tell if it's going to be a boy or a girl.

TOM

Yeah. So?

MARY

But then the baby is born and it's either a boy or a girl. And if it's a boy, his sexual appetite grows very, very quickly, much faster than a girl's, and when the boy is eighteen years old, he's right over here... (KEEPING ONE HALF OF THE DIAMOND STEADY, SHE USES THE OTHER FOREFINGER TO POINT)... on the diamond, at the very height of his sexual abilities.

TOM

Wait a minute. Are you saying I've been going downhill sexually since the age of eighteen?

MARY

That's right. Straight downhill.
(SHE POINTS AGAIN ALONG THE DIAMOND)

TOM

What about girls?

MARY

Well, you see this other side of the diamond?

TOM

Never mind the diamond! What about a woman's sexual abilities?

MARY

You can't understand it without the diamond. (DEMONSTRATES WITH OTHER THUMB AND FOREFINGER) A woman's sexual desires and ability to perform develop much more slowly. Actually, she doesn't hit her peak 'til she's forty.

TOM

(SHAKEN) Which means you won't be hitting your peak for several years yet -- while I've been on the skids sexually for sixteen years. Right?

MARY

Right!

TOM

Great!

MARY

Oh, don't worry.

TOM

Don't worry???

MARY

See -- after forty, my sexual desires will decline very rapidly. So by the time we're sixty, we'll be completely synchronized again sexually -- and everything will be all right.

TOM

(NOT AT ALL REASSURED) When I'm sixty?

MARY

That's right.

TOM

The way you describe it, why should I
want to live that long?

FADE OUT.

ACT TWOSAME - MOMENTS LATER

TOM

Mary, are you trying to scare hell out of me?

MARY

(SINCERELY) No, Tom. There's nothing to be scared about. There are ways to work out our problem.

TOM

How? What am I supposed to do? Find you an eighteen-year old stud? Is that what you want me to do? Bring home a box boy from the supermarket? Or tackle that kid who delivers the paper and drag him up to the bedroom?

MARY

No, no, no, no, no. All you have to do is try to understand me if I act kind of aggressive for the next few years while my sexual appetites are reaching their peak.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

(AS NICELY AS POSSIBLE) And if you can't make it, you know, if you can't make it all the way through to... you know -- well, it...

TOM

(INTERRUPTS, EXPLODING) I can make it all the way through to you-know any damn time I want to! Our sex life would be one hell of a lot better and perfectly normal if you'd just quit pushing at me and clawing at me like we had nothing else to do together in the whole world... Damn, but you've been acting strange lately!

MARY

Strange? How have I been acting strange?

TOM

Well, there's this dumb diamond theory. Then you keep talking about wanting to get out of the house more. And all the things you've been getting yourself into. Trying to fix up things with Mae and her ex-husband. Getting Roberta Walashak together with that policeman. What the hell are you trying to prove???

MARY

I don't know. Maybe I'm trying to prove there's more to life than...

TOM

(INTERRUPTS, ANGRY) Then what??

What the hell do you want?? When we got married, you said all you needed was me. Okay, you got me. Then you wanted a home, a house of your own. Well, I got that for you. Then you wanted to have a baby. Okay, I took care of that, too. And I saw to it that you got a lot more. Just look at this kitchen. You've got a garbage disposal, a washer-dryer combination, a four-slice toaster, a radar oven. About the only thing you don't have is a trash compactor, and you know that's just a matter of time. So now what do you want?

MARY

I don't know, Tom. I want something. Something more.

TOM

(BLOWS) Something more??? I swear, if there's a God in Heaven, he ought to punish you for so much greed!

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Yes, and for reading all those junk magazines about sexual diamonds. I don't want to hear any more about that stuff. And I'll tell you something else. If you'd just give me half a break, my sexual desires would never peak! I can't figure you out, Mary. I don't know what you want. I -- simply -- don't -- know.

TOM EXITS IN HIGH DUDGEON TO LIVING ROOM. DEPRESSED AND WAKEFUL, MARY WASHES OUT HER COFFEE CUP AND SETS ABOUT POURING HERSELF ANOTHER ONE, WHEN...

SFX: KNOCK ON DOOR

SHE OPENS DOOR, ADMITTING GRANDPA, WHO WEARS BATHROBE OVER PJ'S.

MARY

(SURPRISED TO SEE HIM) Grandpa!

GRANDPA

What's going on here? I heard you and Tom arguing during my five o'clock trip to the bathroom, my five-thirty trip and my five-forty-five false alarm.

MARY

Grandpa, I'm glad you're here. I'd like to ask you some very serious questions. Sit down. You're eighty-three years old -- right?

GRANDPA

I don't know if being eighty-three is right, but it's true.

MARY

Well, I'm only thirty-four and I've got a lot of problems, so why don't you just start off by telling me about life.

GRANDPA

(BEAT) All right. Life is like a three-ring circus.

MARY

You mean it's a Barnum and Bailey world, just as foolish as it can be?

GRANDPA

No, I don't know what I meant. I might just as well have said life is like a hero sandwich.

MARY

Grandpa, you've lived for eighty-three years. You must be able to tell me something that'll help me.

GRANDPA

There are only two things I can tell you, Mary. First... I love you.

MARY

(TOUCHED) Oh, Grandpa! (SHE BEGINS TO CRY)

GRANDPA

If I can't tell my own granddaughter I love her without her starting to bawl, I'm just going to have to leave it in a note after I'm gone.

MARY

(APOLOGETIC, STEMS TEARS) I'm sorry. I love you too, Grandpa. Now what's the other thing you can tell me about life?

GRANDPA

You know what happiness is?

MARY

No.

GRANDPA

Happiness is -- like the kids say -- It's finding out the thing you do best and doing it, doing it, doing it. As long as life allows you to, you do your thing. You don't have to do it great, you just have to keep trying. That's happiness.

MARY

But how do I know what my thing is?

GRANDPA

There's the clinker in the deal. Nothing comes easy. You're going to have to find out for yourself, Mary.

MARTHA, IN ROBE OVER NIGHTGOWN
COMES BARGING IN, DISTRAUGHT.

MARTHA

I saw your light on, Mary. I'm so glad
you're up. Grandpa, what are you doing
here? (BARGING RIGHT ON) I haven't
slept all night.

MARY

What's wrong, Ma?

MARTHA

I can't get that picture of George and
that naked hussy in a hotel room in
Milwaukee out of my mind.

GRANDPA

And he wanted to put me in an
institution. Ha! (STARTS FOR THE
DOOR) Thanks for the coffee, Mary.

MARY

I didn't give you any coffee.

GRANDPA

That's all right. It would just mean
another trip to the bathroom.

HE EXITS OUT THE BACK DOOR.

MARTHA

Mary, what am I going to do? Do you
think that girl could have been a hotel
maid? Or do you think she's what they
call a hooker?

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

That's the same thing as a prostitute,
isn't it? Actually, if I was one of
them, I'd prefer to be called a lady of
the evening. Mary, for Heaven's sake,
help me to decide. You know your father.
What kind of a man is he?

MARY

Well...

MARTHA

What I'm asking you is -- do you
believe your father? 'Cause if you
don't, how can I?

MARY

Ma -- this may not sound relative at
first, but can I ask you an intimate
question?

MARTHA

How intimate?

MARY

When you were forty years old, did
you ever think about eighteen year
old boys?

MARTHA CAN DO NO MORE THAN UTTER
A STARTLED SOUND.

MARY (CONT'D)

What I mean is, now that you're fifty-
four, do you ever have the feeling you'd
like to know a man who's about forty-
three? I mean know him intimately.

MARTHA

Mary Hartman, what in Heaven's name are you talking about?

MARY

I was just thinking -- you and Pa won't be back in sync sexually for -- oh -- about eight to ten years.

MARTHA

(EXPLODES) What do you mean, in sink sexually? I am not going to discuss my sexual life in sinks, tubs or anywhere else with anybody except George. And I wouldn't discuss it with him unless somebody held a gun to my head! (BEAT) You know, maybe I should just do something like that and get it over with. (MARTHA RUSHES TO OVEN, OPENS IT, STICKS HER HEAD IN)

MARY

Ma! No! You can't do that!

MARTHA

(TAKING HER HEAD OUT OF THE OVEN)
It's my life. Why can't I take the gas?

MARY

Because this is a Medallion All-electric kitchen.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREESAME - MOMENTS LATER

MARY AND MARTHA ARE AT TABLE,
MARTHA SOBBING, MARY TEARY.

MARY

(TRYING TO COMFORT) Ma, please. Look
on the bright side...

MARTHA

There is no bright side.

CATHY, IN ROBE, VERY UPSET, COMES
HURRYING IN.

CATHY

Mary -- Mother -- what are you two
doing in here, crying without me?

MARY

Cathy, Ma is very upset about those
pictures of Pa and that girl...

CATHY

How can a grown woman be crying over a
thing like that? Doesn't she know
there isn't a man in the world who
doesn't cheat on his wife?

MARY

How can you say such a thing???

CATHY

How can you say such a thing about me saying such a thing? Didn't Tom cheat on you with Mae Olinsky?

MARY

That's not what I'm talking about.

CATHY

Well, it's what I'm talking about. Male lust.

MARY

Cathy, don't talk about male lust in front of Ma. She's upset enough.

CATHY

Oh, why doesn't Mother grow up and face facts? Why don't you grow up? Male lust is male lust! All men cheat. Except maybe my Steve. He's too dear and sweet and poetic to cheat. (BEGINS TO CRY) Which'll make it all the more heartbreaking when I lose him.

MARY

Why will you lose him?

CATHY

Because I'm not worthy of him. Didn't you see how important Johnny Tilson treated him? Didn't you see how that beautiful actress was looking at him and falling all over him?

(MORE)

CATHY (CONT'D)

How can you two sit there crying about ordinary men when I have a poet who's been on the Johnny Tilson show and I'm about to lose him?

MARTHA

My worries about your Daddy are just as important as your worries about Steve.

CATHY

Mother, don't be ridiculous. Your marriage is thirty-five years old. My love is new, and my heart is young and tender. Don't either of you have any pity? You're my family. You're supposed to love me. What do I have to do? Crawl on my hands and knees before you'll give me any help?

SHE CRIES HARDER. MARTHA AND MARY RESPOND.

MARY

Aw, Cathy, you mustn't talk that way. We love you. We really do. Don't we, Ma?

MARTHA

Of course we do. And we are sorry you're not worthy of Steve.

MARY

But he loves you, anyway. He's mad about you. And he's going to marry you.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

We can see that more clearly than you can. You're too close to the situation.

CATHY

(REASSURED) Maybe you're right. Thank you, family.

MARY

Do you feel better now?

CATHY NODS.

MARY

Good. Then maybe I can ask you a question. You're nineteen years old. Right?

CATHY

Uh huh.

MARY

Then how could you possibly be an expert about men and lust? I mean I'm only a few years away from the peak of my sexuality, so naturally I know a lot more about lust than you do.

CATHY

Mary, I don't know what you think you're talking about, but when you compare my experience with your experience...

CATHY CUTS OFF AS...

SFX: LOUD BANGING AT THE DOOR

CATHY (CONT'D)

What in the world is that?

MARY OPENS BACK DOOR, REVEALING
LORETTA WHO IS JUST ABOUT TO BANG
ON THE DOOR AGAIN WITH ONE OF HER
TWO CRUTCHES.

MARY

(SURPRISED) Loretta! You got here all
by yourself!

LORETTA

(DISMISSING THAT) Oh, I can manage
these crutches just fine. (MUCH MORE
EXCITED ABOUT...) Mary, listen, I've
got to tell you. You, too, Cathy and
Martha, I didn't know you were here but
hi. Listen, Mary, I was lying in bed,
Charlie sound asleep beside me and
looking like an angel, I couldn't see
him in the dark but I know how he looks
in his sleep, and I'm just lying there
when all of a sudden this song came
over me. It was just inspiration, pure
and simple. The name of it is Ballad
of a Legless Woman. It's a ballad.

CATHY

(A BIT REPULSED) Ballad of a Legless
Woman?

LORETTA

Isn't that a sure fire title? I came over here to sing it, Mary, while it was still fresh in my mind so you could write down the lyrics before I forget them.

MARY

I'll be glad to, Loretta, but why didn't you write them down yourself?

LORETTA

Well, I was going to, but I couldn't find a piece of paper. I swear that house is in such a turmoil. And then I remembered I haven't learned yet how to sit down off these crutches by myself. I can hoist myself up on them just peachy fine but sitting down off them's a trick. Anyway, Mary, here goes...

MARY

(WHO HAS GOTTEN PAPER AND PENCIL)

Shoot!

LORETTA

(SINGS)

YOU MAY LOOK AT ME AND THINK
THAT I'M ONLY HALF A WOMAN
'CAUSE I HAVEN'T GOT MY LOWER LIMBS.

(MORE)

LORETTA (CONT'D)

BUT ASK YOURSELF WITHIN YOUR HEART

WHAT MAKES A PERSON HUMAN,

AND THIS GOES FOR EITHER HERS OR HIM.

FADE OUT.

ACT FOURSAME - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

MARY, LORETTA, CATHY AND MARTHA
AT TABLE WITH COFFEE. THE
ATMOSPHERE IS MORE RELAXED BUT
NOT CARE-FREE. THEY'VE APPARENTLY
BEEN HAVING A SOBER DISCUSSION.

LORETTA

Really, Mary, I just don't see how
you can say that an eighteen-year old
boy is at the peak of his power to
please a woman. My Charlie is forty-
two, and I swear to high Heaven right
here and now that he climbs to a new
peak every day.

MARY

Well, there's always an exception to
prove every rule; and if I ever saw an
exception, maybe it's Charlie.

MARTHA

I wish you girls wouldn't talk so frank
and open about sex. It embarrasses
women in my generation.

MARY

Okay, Mom -- what do you want to talk
about?

MARTHA

Do you think Daddy was cheating with
that girl in Milwaukee?

MARY AND CATHY SPEAK SIMULTANEOUSLY.

CATHY

Of course he was.

MARY

No, of curse not.

MARY (CONT'D)

(OVER-RIDING CATHY) But if he did cheat,
Ma, it's because, like that article said,
men have this thing; their sex drive goes
downhill and they lose faith in their
ability, and they look for outside
stimulation to prove themselves.

CATHY

Well, that makes sense. If they can
still enjoy themselves, they know they've
still got it.

MARY

How do people know when they're enjoying
themselves? I mean -- during sex.

LORETTA

Lord, Mary, with all them flashing lights
and crashing waves and skyrockets taking
off, who wouldn't know they're enjoying
themselves?

MARY

(TENTATIVE) Skyrockets? Is it really
skyrockets?

LORETTA

It's skyrockets plus. It's like a train going through a long dark tunnel? Then suddenly there's a light and pow!! The train whistle starts screeching and that long, long train starts plungin' out into the light with that crazy engine with the whistle blowing. It's like four minutes of skyrockets!!

MARY

Four minutes?

MARTHA

I wish everybody would let me know what you're talking about. I've seen plenty of trains and Fourths of Julys -- but what are you talking about?

GEORGE, DRESSED FOR WORK, COMES
BUSTING IN.

GEORGE

(DISPLEASED) There you are. I've been looking all over for you two. I'd like my breakfast, and I...

MARTHA

(INTERRUPTS; COOL) George, this is four women having a conversation, and there's no place here for you.

TOM ENTERS FROM LIVING ROOM,
DRESSED FOR WORK, LOOKING
DISPLEASED, BUT HE CAN'T GET A
WORD IN, AS...)

GEORGE

Three of the four women belong to me
and I damn well do have a place here.

MARTHA

(COOL) Your daughters are too old to
belong to you any more, and I'm just a
little bit too wise.

GEORGE

What's that supposed to mean?

MARTHA

Milwaukee.

GEORGE

Will you stop with Milwaukee??? I told
you that was a union frame-up, didn't
I???

MARY

Ma. Pa. Please don't argue. Not
before breakfast. It's bad for the
digestion.

CATHY

I'm the one who should be getting the
attention, anyway. I'm the one with
the biggest problem.

GEORGE

Martha, I only told you that story about
the maid because I didn't think you'd
believe it was a union frame-up, but
it is, dammit!

MARTHA

A likely story. Unions are...

TOM NOW INTERRUPTS BY PUTTING
TWO FINGERS IN HIS MOUTH AND
EMITTING A LOUD WHISTLE. THAT
GETS HIM EVERYBODY'S ATTENTION.

TOM

What the hell is going on here??? A
man takes a shave and a shower and steps
into his own kitchen and it's like a
riot in Grand Central Station! Now...

CHARLIE, HIGHLY AGITATED, RUSHES
IN, WEARING BATHROBE OVER HIS
PJ'S.

CHARLIE

Mary, have you seen Loretta?? Oh, there
you are, honey. (MUCH RELIEVED)
You got yourself over here all by
yourself?

LORETTA

I sure did, Baby Boy.

CHARLIE

I swear you're better on crutches than
that little Russian girl is in the
Olympics.

MARY

Olga Corwin.

CATHY

Korbut.

LORETTA

I hope you weren't worrying about me, Charlie. I didn't realize it was so late. We been having the most fascinatin' discussion about the diamond theory of sexuation.

TOM

(ANGRY) Mary, have you been talking about our personal affairs?

MARTHA

I don't want to hear any more talk about affairs. Not here in this kitchen or in a hotel room in Milwaukee or anywhere else!

GEORGE

(ANGRY) Now look, Martha...

CATHY

Will you please have some regard for my feelings!!!

EVERYONE GOES AT ONCE. TOM RIDES OVER ALL THE WARRING VOICES.

TOM

Okay, that does it!! Knock it off!
Everybody! I have to go to work in a few minutes, and I'd like a few words with my wife. Now out. Everybody out.
Out, out, out!

TOM'S ANGER DOES IT AND THE VISITORS CLEAR OUT IN SOME DISARRAY.

TOM (CONT'D)

All right, Mary, now just what's been going on here?

MARY

I can't discuss it now, Tom. I have to think something through. It's important.

TOM

So is what I want to talk about.

MARY

What I have to think about is more important. Our whole marriage may depend on it.

TOM

What? What are you trying to think through?

MARY

Well, there's an A and a B to it. A -- I talked to Grandpa -- and I have to find out what my thing is. And B -- I have to remember whether I ever had the experience of a long train coming out of a dark tunnel with a whistle blowing and skyrockets.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE #46